The
Non-Subscribing Presbyterian

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Contents.

	PAGE
Editorial	1
Notes of the Month	2
Moderator's New Year Message ..	3
The Laymen's League	3
History of Non-Subscribing Presbyterianism : By Dr. John Campbell. I.—Introductory	4
To Increase Church Income	6
Union for Social Service	7
Essay Competition	7
Young People's Page	8
Lesson Notes for Teachers	9
Reports	12
Obituary Notices—John A. Burnett, Wm. Neill	14

N.B.—All Communications should reach the Editor, Ardeevin, Cadogan Park, Belfast, not later than the 20th of the month preceding publication.

Editorial.

With the present issue the Magazine enters upon a new phase of its career. For thirteen and a half years it has served our community well, expressing its corporate spirit, and providing a vehicle for its varied religious aspirations and activities. All its readers owe a real debt of gratitude to the Rev. Alfred Turner, who throughout that period was the responsible editor and discharged the duties of his office with great conscientiousness and skill. We are glad that he has consented to serve on the new Editorial Board and give it the benefit of his long experience.

It is our earnest hope that the Magazine may still continue to satisfy a deeply-felt need for a reasonable and reverent organ of our associated life as a Christian community. We confidently appeal for the whole hearted, loyal support of all our congregations and members. Only in so far as we can command that support may we expect to succeed, financially and otherwise. The difficulties which confront every denominational paper, especially one with a limited circulation, are manifestly great, and can only be overcome by generous and ungrudging assistance from all quarters.

Each congregation is encouraged to report its doings as part of our Church constituency. It is only reasonable to ask that in return it should provide regular readers for local and other news reported in our pages. We suggest the appointment of some correspondent in each congregation responsible for the regular and up-to-date despatch of interesting information.

Another practical means of assistance is the obtaining of subscriptions, over and above the actual purchase of the Magazine copies. The disparity between selling price of each copy and the actual cost of printing it could easily be met by a general readiness to subscribe small amounts. Of course larger donations will be welcome, but those who can only give small ones should not hesitate to do so. In so doing they will render much-appreciated help.

Again, extra copies might be purchased and given to persons not of our community. We have reason to know of such persons who are interested in our doings and anxious to be familiar therewith. Let us not be afraid to take our rightful position as a witness to the value of freedom and an earnest contributor to the cause of truth. All the signs of the times concur in testifying to the vital need of such a faith as ours. Why should not this Magazine fulfil the important function of disseminating light and truth ?

Notes of the Month.

We wish for all our readers and friends a very Happy New Year. If the dawning of the latter be overcast, may the light soon shine forth with undimmed brightness. To secure happiness for ourselves may not be within our power, but to seek it for the sake of others is a possible policy for all. One way we would suggest is the concentration of aim and endeavour upon our respective churches with a view to their wider usefulness and their greater unity. Another should be the deliberate attempt of every reader of this Magazine to secure another reader and subscriber. In both these ways unselfish purpose would be strengthened, and our common religious life be the gainer thereby. All who are alert for new resolutions might do worse than consider the desirability of these.

* *

The present state of Ireland is a matter of grave concern to all thoughtful minds. No country so disturbed and distracted can fulfil its own special function in the commonwealth of peoples. Not only material prosperity is impossible, but spiritual good is seriously imperilled. To realise this clearly is our first need, to find the means of amendment our second. Fortunately, with the coming of Christmas, many minds seemed more attuned to the promptings of peace. May the spirit of him whose birth we have recently celebrated so touch the hearts of all our countrymen that peace and good-will may become increasingly operative. The day of reprisal and recrimination was dark, and is now, we trust, near its close. May the dayspring from on high speedily come!

The Moderator's timely message will appeal to all our hearts, and evoke a fitting response. We sincerely hope that from his plea, and as a result of his earnest desire to aid our cause, we shall become increasingly conscious of common aims and a common organisation. We have long felt that the Moderator, as the symbol and centre of our united church life, should be made use of up to the limits of his strength, with due regard to his own specific duties. A friendly visit would make real to some outlying congregation its place in the larger life of our community, and thereby give encouragement and supply a needful incentive. Further, it might conceivably arouse greater interest in our Annual Meetings and make them more inspiring.

* *

We were glad to learn that a faithful member of Dromore Congregation, in the person of Mr. Charles M'Caw Baxter, had received the distinction of being made a Justice of the Peace for County Down. The connection between active church membership and public service is one we have long emphasised as a religious community, and it is gratifying to see that a good tradition is being perpetuated in the above instance. May our members be ready at all times to serve the community in this or other practical service.

* *

The Orphan Society is one of our most vigorous and deserving organisations, and the promotion of its further success should be a fitting objective. One practical means of ensuring that is to get in annual subscriptions as early as possible in the New Year. Will the various local treasurers please enter upon their plan of campaign so that all old and some new subscriptions may be lodged with the Treasurer, Mr. Wm. M'Robert, before the end of March? The lists of subscribers should be forwarded to the Secretary, the Rev. Alfred Turner, of Templepatrick.

A New Year's Message from the Moderator.

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." With this apostolic salutation I send greetings to the members of our little group of churches at the beginning of another New Year. The world at large, and our own country in particular, urgently need peace, and only through grace can it be obtained. The year just past has been a sad and tragic one for Ireland, a woeful tale of outrages and disorders, of enmity and intolerance. As a Christian Church we must believe that the only lasting remedy is to be found in an extension of the Christian spirit, we must express in word and deed our strong disapproval of all methods of violence and hatred, and must cultivate and encourage good-will among men. Surely we have learned from the bitter experience of the great war and the subsequent world-wide unrest that brute force is a mischievous and ineffective remedy for any sort of evil. The crying need of the world is for a more thorough loyalty to the Christian principles we profess. The state of our country and of the whole world is a challenge to our Christian faith. What shall be our answer to this challenge? The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church boasts its freedom from outworn creeds and cramping confessions; but freedom is not an end in itself, it is a means to a greater end. Our freedom gives us more direct access to the vital Christian principles, but we must live out those principles and make them more effective in the community. To this end it behoves us to rally to the active support of our Church. It is no excuse to say that we are numerically weak and cannot hope to effect much. No Christian should ever forget the parable of the leaven. It is not the extent of our influence but the strenuousness and earnestness of our effort that should concern us. The New Year calls us to a fresh consecration and a fresh realisation both of our obligations and our opportunities, to show

One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will,
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

The Laymen's League.

In the August issue of this paper a report was given of the meeting in July addressed by Mr. Chas. H. Strong, of New York, which resulted in the appointment of a small committee to confer with the Provisional Committee of the newly-formed Laymen's League of Great Britain and Ireland with a view to the formation of a branch in this district. In the report referred to, the writer, Mr. Eustace Gordon, expressed his hopes and fears thus:—

> "It is earnestly hoped that this Committee will do its utmost to stimulate enthusiasm for the League and not allow its work to hang fire as so many committees are apt to do."

It looks as if there had been some ground for Mr. Gordon's apprehension as regards this small committee, but a brief explanation will show that they have not been willingly inactive. Immediately after Mr. Strong's meeting, and at his suggestion, the Rev. W. Copeland Bowie was communicated with, and was asked to furnish details as to what our English friends, who had established branches of the League, were doing. Mr. Bowie replied at once that matters were being held over until the Autumnal Meeting of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association at Leicester on October 23rd, at which rules and various other details were to be discussed. Mr. Bowie added that he was asking Mr. Edward A. Wilson, of Bristol, the Honorary Secretary for Great Britain, to supply all possible information after the Leicester meeting.

One of the members of the Committee had to be in Bristol early in November, and while there had the pleasure of visiting Mr. Wilson, whom he found "up to the eyes" in preparing detailed information to be disseminated all over the United Kingdom. Mr. Wilson had really more to do than any man with large business undertakings should be expected to deal with, but he is blessed with the keenest enthusiasm. Recently he has sent here copies of the Rules and other information all of which is now accessible.

The History of Non-Subscribing Presbyterianism.

[An Address delivered by Dr. John Campbell in the York Street Lecture Hall, on Nov. 16th.]

I.—Introductory

When we begin to study the history of Christianity we find that it is largely a record of a conflict between two distinct sets of ideas. The first of these is based upon the actual teaching of Christ as recorded in the Gospels and as illustrated by the way in which He lived His life and the spirit in which He faced His death. He has Himself left us an epitome of His religious views in the Lord's Prayer, which might be fairly regarded as His creed, as it contains a short statement of His principles applicable to every possible aspect of human life. His religion is thus a difficult one to live up to. It does not appeal to the selfish and sordid part of human nature and has never been popular. It emphasises duty, even when duty entails self-sacrifice. It is essentially a religion of good character, good conduct, and good motive. Belief in such a religion and an endeavour to act up to it, even though the attempt may be an imperfect one, is bound to have an uplifting influence on humanity, and to lead by a process of gradual evolution to the development of a better type of man as generations go on. It gives the greatest possible hope that, if it were generally adopted, the children would be better than the parents in every generation and that we should in course of time have a world infinitely more pure and wholesome than we have to-day. The influence of heredity counts for much in human life, and the influence of our environment, that is of the people amongst whom we live, counts for even more. If the religion taught by Jesus were universally accepted it can hardly be denied that a very great change in the character and conduct of the people would soon take place. I am fully convinced that the religion of Jesus will ultimately meet with universal acceptance, but the laws by which God leads from the lower to the higher type, and which scientific men call evolution, act slowly, and we cannot foresee the end of what to our limited understanding must often appear contradictory, though we may have implicit faith that the teaching of Jesus is so manifestly true that it will in the end prevail. The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church exists as an evidence that there are in the world some who regard the teaching of Jesus as the supreme guide in life, and look forward to the time when it will receive the whole-hearted devotion of all men.

The second of the two conflicting ideas which we find in the history of Christianity began with the formation of the early Roman Catholic Church. The Church thought that the inherent truth of Christ's religion was not sufficient to compel the attention of the ordinary man or that the teaching of Jesus alone was too severe to win the support of the multitude. The Church, therefore, decided to set up an authority, and compiled from the Jewish and Christian records a series of historical writings to which it gave the name in Greek, "The Books," and which we know as the Bible. Whether an ancient record was to be included in the Bible or left out was decided by the votes of those who composed the Church councils. The Church then went further, and passed in its Councils certain resolutions which were meant to explain the Bible. Out of these grew up short statements of belief known as Creeds. The Church insisted on belief in these, and punished those who did not accept them. It claimed that the Church, with the Pope at its head, was the God-appointed guardian of what the people must believe, and that the only approach which a man had to his Maker was through an accredited official of the Church—in other words a Priest. The Creeds were based on the Old Testament writings, on the New Testament records, and on certain ideas of the ancient Greek philosophers, which those who sought to interpret the Bible by means of the Creeds, had learned. The teaching of Jesus was thus placed upon the same level as the opinions of ancient Jewish writers and Greek philosophers. At the very least we may say that His teaching was not

placed in the supreme position which it is entitled to hold. By a curious inconsistency the Church elevated Jesus to a position in the Godhead and at the same time dethroned His teaching from the most exalted and prominent place which it holds by its own merits. Men's minds were thus drawn away from the teaching of Jesus and fixed upon the resolutions of Church Councils which were embodied in Creeds. This failure to give the teaching of Jesus its due place is one of the greatest objections to all Creeds which have hitherto been made.

As a natural result of this dethronement of the teaching of Jesus, the moral character of the people did not improve, and even the ordained priests, the bishops, cardinals and Popes of the Church sometimes led such evil and scandalous lives that the need for a change became apparent to many. This feeling ended in the Protestant Reformation. Luther at first seemed to be on the way to break new ground and at last give the teaching of Jesus a chance to work. Luther's fundamental principle that God speaks to the heart of the individual man directly and not through the medium of an ordained priest was a great step forward. Here John Calvin came on the scene and turned the current of religious thought into the old Roman Catholic channels. He made certain modifications. He placed the authority in the Bible as a whole and not in the Church. He seems to have forgotten that the Bible owed its existence to the Church. Still worse, he failed to realise that the teaching of Jesus is in itself so true and right that it needs no backing of men or Church to make it the supreme guide to the conduct of life. It needs no sign, as Jesus himself implied. Having discarded the Church as the seat of authority and replaced it by the Bible, Calvin set himself to compile a theological system which would explain the Bible to men. In other words he unwittingly took on himself the authority which he had denied to the Roman Catholic Church and insisted that men should interpret the Bible as he himself interpreted it or perish. He was prepared to push his views on mankind with as much force as ever the Catholic Church had done, and to assent to the punishment or even death of those who did not accept his opinions. The burning of Servetus, a member of the medical profession, on October 27th, 1553, was a result of Calvin's attitude towards those who did not accept his views. Indeed, the burning of Servetus may be regarded as marking the point in time at which Protestantism turned from the fundamental principle of Luther that God spoke in the heart of the individual man and adopted the principle of Catholicism that man must believe in the stated doctrines of the Church or be outside the pale of Christianity. The early Protestant Church followed the example of its Catholic mother, and burned or otherwise severely punished those who did not accept its standards. Public opinion was in the end so strongly opposed to the punishment of people who had other views than those of the Church that this system of persecution gradually died down. In Ireland such punishment remained a possibility until 100 years ago. In 1817 the passage of an Act of Parliament made it impossible to punish anyone who avowed views that were not "orthodox." While the Protestant Creeds were compulsory they were a great evil in that they destroyed the free expression of opinion. Calvin's theology was unfortunate in another way. He founded his system largely on the opinions of the Apostle Paul. Indeed, it may be said that Calvinism is an exposition of the views of Paul rather than of the teaching of Jesus. It thus subordinates the teaching of Jesus. This is one of its chief defects. It fixes the attention on speculative problems and takes it away from the practical moral principles enshrined in the teaching of Jesus. To this one may fairly attribute the condition of society to-day. Were children grounded in the teaching of Jesus only they would grow up more true to Christ's ideals than they do when trained in the speculations of even so great a man as Paul. It is no stigma on Paul to say that he was only a follower of Christ and that his views are far inferior to those of the Master himself.

To be Continued.

To Increase Church Income.

THE ENVELOPE SYSTEM.

The last six years have seen a great change in the financial position of most people. Those who used to be regarded as comfortably well off now find themselves, in many cases, in very straightened circumstances, and many are in much better positions than ever before. This change is naturally reflected in the financial position of the churches, and our friends in other denominations have been quick to adapt themselves to the changed conditions. This has been largely done by the introduction of the Envelope System. I am not aware that any congregation in our particular group of churches has adopted this method of meeting its financial needs, but some of our Belfast churches are "thinking about it."

The system is simplicity itself. At the beginning of the year the congregation decides how much money will be required to meet its financial responsibility, taking into account not only the Minister's stipend but the contribution to the Sustentation Fund, Incidental Fund, and all other obligations, including the Organist's and Sexton's salaries, etc., etc., not forgetting a sum to be placed on one side each year for upkeep and repair of the fabric and the Manse property. Each member then decides how much he or she can give each week towards this grand total, and receives 52 envelopes into which the contributions are placed week by week and put into the collection at service on Sunday; if a Sunday is missed, the contribution is doubled next Sunday; if two Sundays are missed the amount is trebled; and so on. This system obviates the necessity for all the bother of collecting stipend, and does away with all special collections, sales of work and other means by which so many churches try to make ends meet at the close of the year. You know what your outlay is going to be before the year begins, and arrange accordingly. By doing away with the payments for "Stipend," the Minister's salary becomes a fixed sum, which is a blessing to all concerned. The weekly contribution covers everything.

Let us see how it would work out in actual practice in connection with our churches, and let me say I have taken my figures from the Congregational Statistics for the year 1918 which are the latest available. One church with a membership of 220 raised by its own efforts £218. If the Envelope System were introduced and the average amount promised by members worked out at 6d. each per week, the amount raised would be £281, which enables them to give the minister an increase of £50 in salary, while if the promises amounted to 1s. a head each week the amount raised would be £562 per annum, which would allow the manse and church to be overhauled, painted and decorated regularly without resource to sales of work or bazaars. Or take a smaller congregation with only 83 stipend payers. This congregation raises by its own efforts £86, but if the system I am advocating were in force and each member undertook to pay 6d. a week, this would be increased by £24, while if 1s. a week were promised the increase would be £131. And even if we take our wealthiest congregation with its 324 members and the £522 which it raises, under the Envelope System, at 1s. per member, this would be increased to £832.

Another great advantage of this system is that no one feels contributions made in this way. For who would miss 6d. or 1s. a week? How many of us spend that amount each week in cigarettes or chocolates and never know the difference? If we can so easily spend that much on visiting the picture houses why should it not be as readily spent on visiting the churches? Surely our religion is worth 6d. or 1s. a week to us.

Not that there is any intention of fixing a standard of 6d. or 1s. We must all realise that some of our people could not possibly contribute so much. It must be left to each person to decide how much he can afford, and it will naturally fall to those who are best endowed with this world's goods to give most largely. Five or ten shillings a week would not be too much to expect from some people.

This whole matter might well be taken up by the newly-formed Laymen's

League. It would be a useful piece of work for them to begin their activities with. NADIE.

ADDENDUM.—Since the foregoing was penned, it has come to the writer's knowledge that two of our Belfast churches have decided to adopt in a modified form the system advocated. The result will be watched with great interest as the first step towards adopting the system in its entirety.

The Union for Social Service.

At the public lecture held in the Central Hall on Friday, 5th November, there was the usual small attendance. But those who had taken the trouble to attend were rewarded by hearing a most interesting and provocative lecture by Professor H. O. Meredith, of Queen's University, on "Learning about Society." The Moderator (Rev. G. L. Phelps) took the chair at 7-30 p.m. As Professor Meredith insisted at the outset that what he had to say was not meant for report, we can do nothing more than state in general terms his main contention, which was that even amongst the growing number of experts on social and economic questions, scarcely anything was accurately known about society. He said that in every country, and especially in Ireland, there were lacking any complete data about matters of vital importance to the community. Thus when folk spoke about the increased cost of living or the rise in wages, as if everybody knew just what this meant, they were speaking without any accurate knowledge. As yet there existed no means of getting any complete data, even on what seemed comparatively simple matters, and of many much more important matters bearing on the life of the people, our knowledge was the merest guess work. What was wanted was a sociological survey on the lines of the geographical survey. But we should never get this until those who really desired to learn about society pressed for information and saw to it that new machinery was created for that purpose. Without such information no really satisfactory social reforms could be even attempted.

A most interesting discussion followed in which, among other things, our almost complete ignorance on matters pertaining to the social and economic life was insisted on. The general feeling was that much could be done privately by combining, as the Social Service Union seeks to combine, social work with inquiry into social conditions, and with the information thus gained press for more complete public inquiry.

The Study Circle meets every Wednesday (except the second Wednesday in each month) in the Central Hall at 7-30, and is at present studying "Christianity and Industrial Problems." New recruits will be welcome.

ERNEST H. PICKERING, Hon. Secretary.

The Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland.

(Sunday School Department.)

Essay Competition.

Two Prizes of 10s. each (one for a boy and one for a girl) will be given for the best essay on ONE of the following subjects :—

1. Jesus' Teaching on Prayer.
2. Jesus' Teaching on Love and Forgiveness.
3. The Character of Saul.
4. The Friendship of David and Jonathan.

Any boy or girl in our Sunday Schools of any age can enter for the competition.

The Committee reserve to themselves the right to reduce the amount of the prizes if none of the essays reaches a high enough standard, or to give an additional prize if the entries warrant it.

Essays should be sent in under a nom-de-plume, with the age of the competitor stated, not later than 31st January, 1921, to—

ERNEST H. PICKERING,
(Convener).
44 Marlborough Park S.,
Belfast.

N.B.—Through error, in the circulars sent round to our Sunday Schools, the amount of the prizes was stated as 5/- each.

Young People's Page.

The New Year.

Here is a riddle for you to think over and ask your friends to guess:—

"I shall my father's name assume:
I change my name three days together,
Yet live but one, in any weather."

What do you think is the answer? Something that it is well for us to think of at the beginning of a new year when we start on a fresh page of our life. What is it that changes its name on three consecutive days? The answer is "To-day." It will take its father's name and become "Yesterday"; before it became "to-day" it was called "To-morrow"; but it is only "to-day" for *one* day, and can never be that again. Our life has been compared to all sorts of things. The Bible tells us it is like *a tale that is told—a pilgrimage—a swift post—a swift ship—a handbreadth—a shepherd's tent removed—a thread cut by the weaver—a dream—a sleep—a vapour—a shadow—a flower—a weaver's shuttle—water spilt on the ground—grass—wind—nothing.* And our modern poets also do this. You may remember Russell Lowell, the American, say:—

"Life is a leaf of paper white
Whereon each one of us may write
His word or two, and then comes night."

and Longfellow says:—

"Our to-days and yesterdays
Are the blocks with which we build.
. . . . . .
Build to-day, then, strong and sure,
With a firm and ample base;
And ascending and secure
Shall to-morrow find its place."

There is another poem; but I do not know by whom it is written. It compares our lives, made up of years, to the weaving of a certain kind of tapestry or carpet, where the worker sees only the back of the work while he is at it—the wrong side; and it is only after it is finished that he sees the real effect. He has a pattern to work by, which hangs above the loom he is working at; and by following this pattern he is able to keep his tapestry right, even though he cannot see properly what he is doing. Would you like to learn this little parable poem? Here it is:—

"Let us take to our hearts a lesson—no lesson
can braver be—
From the ways of the tapestry weavers on
the other side of the sea.
Above their heads the pattern hangs: they
study it with care,
The while their fingers deftly work, their
eyes are fastened there!

They tell this curious thing' besides, of the
patient, plodding weaver;
He works on the wrong side always, but
works for the right side ever.
It is only when the weaving stops, and the
web is loosened and turned,
That he sees his real handiwork—that his
marvellous skill is learned.

Ah! the sight of its delicate beauty, how it
pays him for all his cost!
No rarer, daintier work than his was ever
done by the frost!
Then the master bringeth him golden hire,
and giveth him praise as well:
And how happy the heart of the weaver is
no tongue but his own can tell.

The years of man are the looms of God, let
down from the place of the sun,
Wherein we are weaving always, till the
mystic web is done—
Weaving blindly, but weaving surely, each
for himself his fate,
We may not see how the right side looks:
we can only weave and wait.

But looking above for the pattern, no weaver
need have fear.
Only let him look clear into heaven—the
Perfect Pattern is there.
If he keeps the face of the Father for ever
and always in sight,
His toil shall be sweeter than honey, his
weaving is sure to be right.

And when his task is ended, and the web
is turned and shown,
He shall hear the voice of the Master. It
shall say to him 'Well done!'
And the white-winged angels of heaven, to
bear him thence, shall come down:
And God for his wage shall give him, not
coin, but a glorious crown."

Lesson Notes.

In accordance with the scheme for 1921, *prepared by the Sunday School Committee of the N.S.P.C.I.*

January 2. *The Birth of John.*— Luke i. 8-17. Key text, Mark i. 2.

1. The chief point in this lesson is *Preparation.* Everything worth having needs careful preparation. We do not, for instance, sow the good seed until the ground has been carefully prepared. Explain to the younger children how the ground is prepared. So, neither could the good seed, as expressed by Jesus, be sown until the world was more or less prepared for him. Our hearts have to be ready before he can enter in. Note carefully the language of verse 17, which shows that John's task was to prepare men's hearts, and also the language of the key text, which is based on the custom, necessary in days when roads were few and ill kept, of sending on an official to make the way passable, when a monarch had to go on a journey. In the same way the "Messenger" (John) was to make spiritual preparation for the coming of the Lord's anointed. For the elder scholars it would be worth while to discuss such things as education, apprenticeship, etc., to emphasise the fact that nothing can be done of any value without preparation.

2. "*John*" means "*The Lord is gracious,*" and thus is expressed the fact that, no matter how far astray we have gone from the path of right living, God offers every opportunity and help to return to it. We may meet his messengers everywhere, not only in the form of John the Baptist, but in a kind word, an accident, a sorrow or a joy. For example, in the poem "Pippa Passes," by Robert Browning, we see how an innocent, cheerful little girl is able by her song to act as God's messenger, and prepare the way for God's goodness in the heart of various wicked and foolish folk.

3. *John's mother, Elizabeth,* is related to Jesus' mother, Mary, and the close connection is continued throughout their lives. Time after time John is the means of helping on the work of Jesus.

4. *Dedication,* verse 15. Those who would be true messengers must try to make their new lives as pure and noble as possible.

For *senior scholars* show how the words of the key text, taken from Malachi iii. 1., and originally spoken with regard to the Messiah himself, who shall prepare the way for God, have been adapted so that they refer to the messenger who shall prepare the way for the Messiah. It is interesting to note that some folk actually thought that John, because he was a messenger, was the Messiah, but John humbly refused this great title.

January 9. *The Birth of Jesus.*— Luke ii. 8-20. Key text, Luke ii. 12.

1. *Jesus' lowly birth.* His father and mother were quite lowly people. Joseph was a carpenter. When they came to Bethlehem the inn was so full that lowly people like them had to go into the stable, and there in a manger, among the cattle and horses, Jesus was born. This is surely an inducement to all little children to try to be children of God, for no matter how unimportant they may seem to be, they should remember how lowly was the birth of our Lord. For *senior scholars,* stress might be laid on the fact that it is in the Gospel according to St. Luke, which is above all a tender, human gospel, that we get this story of the manger, and also of the worship of the lowly shepherds. Another very interesting point is that the genealogical tables insist that Joseph, although a lowly carpenter, was a direct descendant of David. This is quite possible, *e.g.,* in Scotland, where many humble families belong to the royal clan. St. Paul also lays stress on the fact that Jesus really was directly descended from David (Romans i. 3).

2. *The Shepherds.* Nothing is more beautiful than the story of the greatest of all revelations being made to the shepherds watching their flocks. But the lowly nature of their calling does not alter the fact that it demanded such

excellent virtues as patience and tenderness. Not without a keen insight into spiritual realities does Luke present us with the picture of the old shepherds worshipping the little child, who one day would be called "the Good Shepherd."

3. *The angel's message. Peace and good-will.* It is on these that the kingdom of heaven will be founded. I leave it to the teachers to expand this point. Every little babe is a messenger of peace and good-will. It is the children who make the home happy. *Elder scholars* might be interested in the other possible versions of the angel's message, namely, "Peace on earth among men, in whom he is well pleased," and "Peace on earth among men of good-will." A most valuable book for this whole series of lessons is Dr. Carpenter's "Life in Palestine, where Jesus lived," which will easily be got, price 1s., through the Depository. For the present lesson the chapter on the Messianic Hope is of great value.

4. *Christ the Lord.* "Christ" means "Messiah," which means "the anointed Messenger of God, who shall reform and save the world." Not only the Jews, but many other folk, were looking forward to the coming of the Messiah, and now He had come in a lowly manger in Bethlehem.

January 16. *The Wise Men.* Matthew ii. 1-15. Key text, Matthew ii. 11.

1. *The Star in the East.* The wise men believed that the beautiful stars can tell us many wonderful things, and when they saw a particularly beautiful star arise, they decided that this must mean that the Christ had come. Treat this story reverently, because it expresses the great spiritual truth that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

2. *Herod's jealousy.* At once, he, an earthly king, was afraid lest another earthly king should arise to take his place. He did not know that the kingdom of Christ was greater than any kingdom he ruled, for it was the human heart the wide world o'er. To do good is far greater than to be rich and powerful for he who does good has a place in the eternal kingdom of God. For *senior scholars*, Herod's fear can well be explained on the ground that the populace wrongly thought that the Messiah would turn Herod off his throne and rule in his place.

3. *The Wise Men's Offerings.* Nothing was too good for the Holy Child. Every little babe that is born calls for all that is best from its parents, who think that nothing is too good for it. The value of the wise men's gifts consisted in the fact that they were inspired by love. Everything given in love is gold, myrrh, and frankincense. The thing is to do and give of our best. The practice of giving presents at Christmas time is closely connected with this incident. For *senior scholars* stress may be laid on the fact that the Christ Child symbolises our religious life, our soul, and that the whole wealth of our thought, learning and activity should be offered to its service; also teachers themselves might learn the lesson that in order to approach their children properly, they need to do so in the spirit that nothing is too good for them. Religion needs thought and learning. It is for the wise as well as for the unlearned. It is for all.

January 23. *The Boyhood of Jesus.* Luke ii. 39-52. Key text, Luke ii. 52.

1. *Jesus' Native Place.* Although Jesus was born at Bethlehem, his home was Nazareth, a small hill town in Galilee. Here he would see the various scenes and people which he mentions in his parables, the lilies of the field, the shepherds, the women making bread, the fishermen, and so on. Here he grew up like other children, playing the games they did, *e.g.*, weddings and funerals. For *senior scholars* emphasize the significance of Galilee as the scene of Jesus' life and work. The people there were more enterprising, less fixed in religious orthodoxy than those who dwelt about Jerusalem; so that new religious teaching would find more favour there than at Jerusalem.

2. *In the Temple.* Jesus, by his innocence and nobility, was able to astonish the great teachers. When

children are really good they can teach and help their elders a good deal, *e.g.*, Tolstoi's story (in "Twenty-three Tales") called "Little girl wiser than men." For *elder scholars*, lay stress on the fact that they should not think themselves too clever. "Shades of the prison house begin to close upon the growing boy." Encourage them to keep their minds fresh and young by means of noble ideals.

3. *His Obedience.* Although Jesus felt that he was already on God's (His Father's) business, yet he obeyed his parents, and came home with them to grow up and learn. He had still much to learn, because the wise man has never finished learning. From the loving care of his father and mother he learnt above all things the loving care of his Father in Heaven. Every home should be a little heaven, and no child is worthy of heaven, or is fit to talk of heaven, who has not learnt how to make his own home heavenly.

January 30. *John, the Forerunner, baptizes Jesus.* Read Mark i. 1-13. Key text, Mark i. 4.

N.B.—Call the attention of elder scholars to the fact that Mark's Gospel, which is regarded as the most historical, and John's Gospel, which is regarded as the most spiritual, have neither any reference to the virgin birth. The birth stories and genealogies in Matthew and Luke are later additions. For the earliest Christians, Jesus was Christ, not because of his virgin birth, but because he was re-born of the spirit by baptism. (Compare John iii. 3.)

1. *John the Baptist's Gospel.* John's Gospel is that of one who prepares the way. He is concerned more with past sins than future hopes. Before men could listen to Jesus they had to feel the weight of their sins and the desire for a better life. John, therefore, called upon them to repent, and laid stress on the wrath to come. He represents the accusing voice of conscience. Most of us dislike to listen to the voice of conscience, because it usually tells us how wicked we have been. But it is necessary that bad behaviour and evil thoughts should make us feel miserable, or we should never want anything better. When we have done wrong we can only undo it by feeling miserable and repentant. That is the first step. The next step is to take our sorrow to our parents or teachers, or above all, to God, our heavenly parent, and then their love will comfort us. In this way we learn to desire goodness by detesting badness. John first—the voice of conscience; then Jesus—the spirit of mercy and love.

2. *John's humility.* As we learn elsewhere, many folk thought that John was the Messiah. But John was great enough and wise enough to know and admit that he only *prepared;* he did not know all. So he pointed them to a greater, to one who would not only make men sorry for their sins, but would love them and help them to be good. The greatest and best men are always humble. For instance, the great scientist, Sir Isaac Newton, compared himself to a little child who had found just one pebble on the beach cast up by the great sea of knowledge. And Jesus himself refused to be called good, and said that God alone deserved that title, and that God alone could make men truly good. John prepared the way for Jesus; Jesus shewed the way to God.

3. *The Baptism.* In another way, Jesus showed his humility. He began his work by coming to John for baptism, thus showing that he too wished to repent. The consequence was that God acknowledged him as the greatest of all. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The *dove* is always regarded as the bird of hope and peace. Thus it was the dove which brought the olive branch to Noah, and so assured him of a better and brighter future. For *elder scholars* call attention to the fact that in Mark (which is believed to be the earliest Gospel) the opening of the heavens, the dove, and the voice are not stated as facts which all could see, but as a vision granted to Jesus. Matthew is more or less in agreement with Mark, but Luke states the events as though they were outwardly visible.

E. H. P.

Reports.

[These will be heartily welcomed. Promptness in despatch and brevity in form are essential.]

Unity Guild.—The December meeting of the Guild was held in York Street Hall on Wednesday, 8th inst., when most interesting papers were given by Miss Praeger and Mrs. Philipson. Miss Praeger had chosen for her subject "Facial Expressions," and she cleverly illustrated her remarks with drawings. She was also kind enough to bring with her a series of drawings showing different types of human faces, each of which represented an animal, bird, or fish. These were used as a competition, and Mrs. Jackson, who succeeded in guessing correctly eight out of the nine pictures, was allowed to choose one of the drawings as a prize. The title of Mrs. Philipson's paper was "Notes on life in Oxford," and it was evident that the lecturer was quite at home with her subject. So realistic was the paper that one could almost fancy one saw before them the beautiful avenues bounded by their trees, and the imposing Colleges, with their busy stream of students passing to and fro. On the motion of Mrs. Jackson, seconded by Miss A. F. Montgomery, a hearty vote of thanks was passed to the two ladies, whose kind offices had made "Ladies' Night" a great success as usual.

The Annual Whist Drive and Dance will be held in the Central Hall on Saturday, January 15th, from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

An entertainment will be given in the Mission Hall, Stanhope Street, on Saturday, January, 29th, at 7 o'clock.

Ballycarry.—The Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held on the third Sunday in October, the preacher at both the morning and evening Services being the Minister. The church was beautifully decorated in a very artistic manner, the flowers, fruit and corn being both plentiful and choice. The musical arrangements were in the capable hands of Mr. Campbell, of Ailsa Craig, Whitehead. The choir were heard to great advantage in the anthem, "Ye shall dwell in the land" (Stainer); Miss Hamilton and Mr. Mitchell being the soloists. There were also special harvest hymns, and a solo by Miss K. Brennan. Both morning and evening there were good congregations; at the evening service many failed to gain admission.

Belfast: Domestic Mission. — On Thursday, November 11th, a solemn Commemoration and Intercession Service was held at the Mission, conducted by the Missionary. A wreath of laurels was placed underneath the Memorial Tablet and over the Roll of Honour, while the Tablet itself was draped with the Union Jack. Specially selected hymns, prayers and readings were used, while the address "In Solemn Remembrance," was based on the text which is to be inscribed on the Essex Hall Memorial, viz.: "It is for the living to resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain."

Our second "Drawing Room" Party was held on Thursday, November 25th, there being 120 Mission members and friends present. Light refreshments were served, after which a very full, varied, and highly appreciative musical programme was entered upon. Mrs. Eustace Gordon kindly undertook the duties of the "chair," while our artistes for the evening were: Miss Eileen Miller, Revs. J. Dare Davies and M. Watkins, Messrs. Fleming, W. Cochrane and the Missionary. Two very amusing recitations were also given by one juvenile friend. Votes of thanks to the artistes, visiting friends, and "tea-makers" were moved and seconded. A most enjoyable evening was then concluded by the pronouncement of the National Anthem.

On Thursday, December 9th, a Temperance Service was held in the Church, conducted by the Rev. R. Philipson, B.A., of Downpatrick, whose helpful and suggestive discourse was greatly enjoyed by all present. The Choir rendered appropriate temperance hymns during the service.

We are indebted to the Rev. J. A. Kelly for kindly conducting our Weeknight Service on November 17th.

Belfast: First Church.—A very successful Re-union Social of past and present Sunday School scholars and teachers was held in the Central Hall on November 24th. Parents and friends

were also present in goodly numbers. Proceedings began with tea, served by the Misses Hewitt, Parker, and other willing helpers. Games and a miscellaneous programme appealed to all, and made the function very enjoyable. On December 12th the Organist and an augmented Choir rendered many of the attractive items from Handel's "Messiah" in the presence of a large congregation. Favourite solos were sympathetically rendered by the professional members of the choir, while the choruses, fitly concluded by the "Hallelujah Chorus," testified to the painstaking care of the organist and choirmaster, Mr. Albert Taylor, A.R.C.M., L.R.A.M. The new electric light installation was unfortunately delayed in its completion, but will be in use at an early date.

Crumlin.—On Sunday, December 5th, the Crumlin Troop of Boy Scouts held their first Church Parade. Twenty-one in number, they assembled at our Church and contributed greatly to the interest and warmth of the service.

Comber.—The series of lectures arranged by the Young People's Society for the winter session was inaugurated on Wednesday, December 1st, by the Rev. H. J. Rossington, M.A., B.D., of Belfast. There was a fairly good attendance, and on the motion of Mr. Sam Niblock, Mr. Alexander Orr was voted to the chair. The subject of the lecture was "Then and Now," or "1820 and 1920." These two periods form very important landmarks in the history of our Kingdom and Empire, one succeeding the Napoleonic wars, the other the great world-war of 1914-18. Mr. Rossington's review was lucid and interesting. He reminded us that the problems and difficulties created by the Napoleonic war and the general unrest that followed were as grave and urgent as the problems with which we are faced in these turbulent times. Our forefathers faced the problems of their day with courage and foresight, and the result was a remarkable progress in the industrial, social, scientific and educational life of our kingdom. If the grave problems of to-day are faced in the same spirit and with the same courageous foresight, his period also may mark the beginning of another era of wonderful advancement in all vital departments of our national life. Mr. J. M. Andrews, Rev. J. G. Davis, and Mr. Orr took part in the discussion. A very hearty vote of thanks was accorded Mr. Rossington for his readiness in coming to help our Society and for his eloquent and scholarly lecture.

Downpatrick.—On Friday, 26th November, there was a very happy social evening for the junior members of the congregation. Miss M. Cochrane presided over the tea and refreshments. Solos were sung by Mr. Jos. Newman and Mr. Jack Patterson, while Mrs. Philipson afforded much pleasure in a monologue, "The lost Golosh." The evening closed with the National Anthem and three cheers for the workers.

In the Manse schoolroom on Wednesday evening, 8th December, Rev. Ralph Philipson held the second of the fortnightly lantern entertainments in connection with the Children's Club and Guild. The chief item was an admirable set of slides on a visit to a coal mine, showing in great detail how our coal is secured, and as the lecturer had himself been down a mine on several occasions he was able to give a good deal of interesting information. There were also two humorous stories. Mr. R. I. Chambers ably acted as lanternist. A similar entertainment was held on the previous evening at Hollymount, and on both occasions there was an excellent attendance.

Holywood.—The Annual Meeting of the Congregation was held after Morning Service on Sunday, December 5th, Mr. William Patterson presiding. The Chairman, in moving the adoption of the report, announced that though owing to unusual heavy expenditure the balance sheet showed a small debit balance, the Treasurer had been able, through the generosity of some anonymous friends, not only to clear off the deficit but to raise sufficient to allow for a bonus to the Minister. He proposed that a bonus of £30 be paid. This was seconded by Mr. W. H. Niall Nelson and carried unanimously. On the motion of Mr. W. K. Graham, seconded by Mr. Hugh Shannon, jun., the following were

elected to the vacant places on the Committee:—Miss Praeger, Messrs. James Meneely, James M'Kelvey and Robert Steele. A vote of thanks to the members of the choir for their services was carried on the motion of Mr. F. A. Robinson, seconded by Mr. Hugh Shannon. Mr. W K. Graham was re-appointed representative Governor of the Sullivan Schools.

The Annual Congregational Soiree was held on Thursday, December 16th. After refreshments had been served, the Rev. G. L. Phelps took the chair, and an excellent programme of music was gone through, during which songs were sung by Mrs. M'Kelvey, Mrs. Robin, Miss Swan, Mr. James M'Kisack, and Mr. James Shannon. An interesting and amusing musical competition gave variety to the programme. After thanks had been rendered to the tea-makers, the prize-givers and the singers, a very enjoyable evening ended with the singing of the National Anthem.

Moira.—The Harvest Thanksgiving Services were held in the Old Meeting House, on Sunday October 31st. The morning service was conducted by the Minister, Rev. W. Weatherall, and in the evening the special preacher was Mr. A. L. Agnew, B.A. In spite of the terrible weather the church was packed from an early hour. Mr. Agnew took as his text, Habakkuk iii. 17: "Although the field shall yield no meat . . . yet will I rejoice," and his sermon was remarkable in that, while it made a special appeal to many, not least to the many ex-soldiers present, the speaker never lost sight of his opening remark that a harvest thanksgiving service ought to be first and last a thanking of God for the harvest. Mr. Ernest Worth presided at the organ, and the harvest music under his direction was much appreciated. The anthem "I will feed My Flock," and 'Sun of my Soul" were given, the solos in each being taken by Mr. Tudor of Belfast. The church was decorated as usual by the younger people of the congregation with the assistance of a few friends. The collections both morning and evening exceeded those of any previous year.

Mountpottinger.—There is not much to record as regards activities during the past few weeks, but work is proceeding steadily in preparation for our Bazaar next April.

In aid of the Sunday School Stall an excellent Concert was given in the Schoolroom on Wednesday, December 15th, by the "Black and White Concert Party," under the direction of Mrs. L. W. M. Hay and Mrs. E. R. Jackson, as a result of which an appreciable sum is expected to be forthcoming. Our thanks are due to the talented amateurs in question for so kindly giving their services. After occupying the position for four months only Mr. Jack Russell resigned his post as Organist, having been appointed to a similar position at Megain Memorial Church, Newtownards Road. Pending the appointment of a successor Mr. E. M'Cullough has deputised with much acceptance.

The Children's Guild is proving very welcome to the Sunday School scholars and large attendances are recorded weekly.

Friday, January 14th, has been selected as the date for the Sunday School New Year Party and Prize Distribution.

Obituary Notice.

MR. JOHN R. BURNETT, Belfast.

The death of Mr. John R. Burnett, at the advanced age of 80 years, will cause sorrow to many people who valued his friendship and appreciated his kindly personality Up to comparatively recent times he was able to move about freely, having a keen appreciation of the scenery about Belfast, and being always a most active and ardent pedestrian. About a fortnight before his death he had a stroke following upon an earlier attack, and never rallied therefrom. Another characteristic was his sympathetic appreciation of music, he being himself a musici an of very considerable ability. As in his later years he had retired from business, he was able to give himself to his love of music and literature, and cultivate his knowledge of the country. He had a wide circle of friends and was greatly

loved. Widespread sympathy will be felt for his sorrowing widow and daughters. The funeral service in the house was conducted by the Rev. H. J. Rossington, of whose congregation he was a member for many years. The interment took place at Holywood on December 15th, the service at the graveside being performed by the Rev. H. J. Rossington.

MR. WILLIAM NEILL, Downpatrick.

The sudden death of Mr. William Neill, plumber, is generally regretted in the Downpatrick district, and sincere sympathy is felt with his sorrowing wife and family. Mr. Neill's buirdly figure, his cheerful presence, will be greatly missed in the sparsely filled ranks of those who really count in the various activities of the historic old town, of which he never ceased to be proud that he was a citizen. He was a well-informed man, of acute intelligence and good sense, none among his fellows more tolerant or forbearing, none endowed with a kindlier sense of humour. His disposition was essentially sociable. Nor was his gaiety a mask. Alas, that those he so often gladdened by his pleasant wit and play of fancy will know him no more! He acknowledged the blessings of Providence. During his last illness, far from repining at his fate, he found consolation in the fact that he had so many friends, and that he had lived a full and happy life. He was laid to rest with Masonic honours in the burial-ground of the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, Rev. R. Philipson being the officiating minister.

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